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ICS 7819-88

7 September 1988

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

FROM: Lieutenant General Edward J. Heinz, USAF  
Director, Intelligence Community Staff

SUBJECT: Multilateral Counterterrorist Data System (MCDS)

1. Per your request, this memorandum follows-up our discussion on 24 August of the proposed MCDS initiative. My recent meeting with Community representatives to address the issues raised in your 24 June memorandum (reference) had mixed results. All of the participating organizations, with the significant exception of the DO, were interested in exploring the IHC-sponsored MCDS definition proposal. The DO's opposition appears to stem, in large part, from the belief that the goal of this effort is to make available substantially more information to a wider audience than the DO (or other originator) would otherwise consider appropriate. This is not the case. The focus of effort will be on improving the utility of data normally disseminated to recipients in cable or hard copy form. It is not assumed that the DO would necessarily make available more data than it is currently providing to DESIST. As concerns increasing the breadth of dissemination, the thrust of the concept to be explored is actually in the opposite direction. The projected MCDS would likely have fewer subscribers than proposed for DESIST, as well as more explicit internal dissemination profiles and access controls. [ ]

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2. Ascribing the lack of Community support for the current DESIST to an unwillingness to share data is an oversimplification. Our inquiries in the Community reveal a more complex set of issues comprising:

a. A concern with control of access to compartmented data within the system, principally on the part of the DO and NSA.

b. A widespread perception within the Community, to a significant extent unjustified, that DESIST is of little use. This reflects technical and security restrictions which limit the system's operational utility and "user friendliness".

c. A Community view that DESIST is a CIA system to which other agencies are limited subscribers without significant operational influence or management participation. [ ]

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Given the above, it is unlikely that Community agencies will agree to specific data sharing, access control, and resource commitments until they can assure themselves that a future DESIST/MCDS will meet their requirements and concerns. Hence, IHC's effort to establish a forum within which this can be addressed.

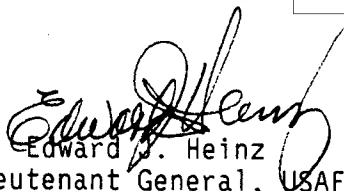
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3. The operational justification for creation of DESIST remains valid, notwithstanding the system itself is substantially underutilized. The need for effective interaction and mutual support among organizations with counterterrorist and antiterrorist missions continues, a requirement that appropriate automated information handling capabilities can help meet, as the valued contribution of FLASHBOARD indicates. Our ability to meet that need, however, is degraded to the extent agency automated information programs are fragmented and incompatible.

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4. Maintenance of the status quo with respect to DESIST is not, in my view, a viable option. The resources CIA is devoting to supporting the system and its data bases are disproportionate to their utilization, both in-house and without. At the same time, other agencies (most notably DIA) are building their own systems and data bases independently of one another. Further, a decision will be required regarding FLASHBOARD which will need equipment replacement in the next several years. Our current opportunity to determine whether these pieces can be fitted together in an effective way is transitory. I believe we should take advantage of it. I, therefore, recommend that you approve the IHC System Definition Initiative.

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Edward J. Heinz  
Lieutenant General, USAF

IHC SYSTEM DEFINITION INITIATIVE:

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APPROVED:

  
Deputy/Director of Central Intelligence

8-13-88

Date

DISAPPROVED:

  
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

Date

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